A rejoinder to an article by Mr. Nadeem Paracha

(Dr. Mirza Sultan Ahmad)

An article, “Ahmadiyya question: Setting Niazi Free” was published in daily Dwan 16th November 2014. This article was written by an eminent columnist of Pakistan, Mr. Nadeem Paracha. In this article some new points have been raised about the second constitutional amendment. The second constitutional amendment declared Ahmadis as non-muslims for the purpose of law and constitution. In brief according to this article

1. Before 1970 elections, Ahmadi’s struck a deal with National Awami Party(NAP), that they will support them in the coming elections. In return NAP committed that they will not allow maulvis to revive anti –Ahmadiyya compaign and excommunicate Ahmadi’s. This claim was made by a veteran NAP leader Mr. Azizullah Sheikh in his memoirs, “ Story Untold”.
2. But later, Maulana Kausar Niazi, succeeded in convincing Ahmadiyya community to support Pakistan Peoples Party. And leader of NAP, late Khan Abdul Wali Khan was greatly annoyed by this.
3. Many years after 1974 Maulana Kausar Niazi told Khalid Hassan that when anti- Ahmadiyya riots had started,he advised Mr. Bhutto, not to pursue this problem.
4. According to another PPP leader Mr. Rafi Nasim Mr. Bhutto had told his members of Parliament to vote according their conscience.

5. Mr. Azizullah, a leader of NAP, has written in his memoirs that even in 1974, Khan Abdul Wali Khan was simmering the way Ahmadiyya leaders had broken their deal with his party, and when he was asked that why he is not vocal about this issue he said that let Ahmadis go to the ones they had voted for. Then Mr. Paracha writes that NAP members abstained on this issue and did not vote in favor of second constitutional amendment. This is one of the most important point in this article, and we'll try to verify this claim.

Regarding the first three points, it is sufficient to point out that both Late Khan Abdul Wali Khan and Maulana Kausar Niazi, never made such claims. Maulana Kausar Niazi mentioned the aftermath of second constitutional amendment in his book, " Aur Line Kut gayee." But he neither claims that he played any role in soliciting support of Ahmadis, nor makes any mention of his opposition to this amendment. Rather he wrote that Mr Bhutto was worried that clergy is taking credit of this amendment. Mr. Niazi wrote that he said that clergy had sacrificed a lot for this cause. Though the book, "Facts are facts" written by Khan Abdul Khan is about independence movement, but he must have given hundreds of interviews after 1974. In none of his interviews he went on record to say that Ahmadis struck any deal with him and then instead of keeping the promise they supported PPP. Neither Late Wali Khan nor any of NAP leaders made any such claim till 2012. In 2012 barrister Azizullah Shaikh, published his memoirs " Story Untold" In this book it was written that when in 1974 when riots against Ahmadis were going on, Mr. Azizullah Shaikh asked Mr. Wali Khan that why he, a sworn secular, is not raising his voice against what is going in the country. In reply he said, with a hint of scorn in his voice, that he wonders that Qadianies had the face to expect him to speak in their favor. Then, according to Mr. Shaikh, Mr Wali Khan narrated this story. It is interesting to note that even, according to Mr. Shaikh, he was totally unaware of any supposed deal of Ahmadis with NAP uptil that time. Is it possible that a deal of this sort was struck by NAP, and their top leadership was totally unaware of it? If according to this deal Ahmadis were supposed to openly support NAP, and then they changed the sides, then top leadership of NAP must have known about it.

How did Mr. Bhutto contact Jammat-e-Ahmadiyya to get their votes and support for 1970 elections? This aspect was discussed in Iain Adamson, in his book " A man of God".Before writting this book he interviewed Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, . He wrote that Mr. Bhutto requested for a meeting with Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, and discussed this question with him. Dr. Mubashar Hassan was present on this occasion. Iain Adamson neither mentions anything about the so called deal with NAP or Kausar Niazi's role . This book was published in 1990. At that time both Mr. Wali Khan and Maulana Kausar Niazi were alive. As this book was written by a well known author and its first edition was in English, it was quite well known book since its first edition. But neither Mr. Wali Khan nor Maulana Kausar Niazi denied the facts narrated in this book.

Now let us examine the fourth point that when the resolution to declare Ahmadis as Non-Muslims was tabled in the National Assembly, according to a PPP leader Mr. Rafi Nasim Mr. Bhutto had told his members of Parliament to vote according their conscience.

Was it so? Let us discuss this question in a rational way. Let us see what happened few months before the National Assembly started discussing second constitutional amendment? A meeting of Rabita

Alam-e-Islami was arranged in Holy Mecca. Pakistan was represented by one of the federal secretaries Mr. Tajamal Hashmi. In a subcommittee a resolution was moved that Ahmadis should be declared non-muslim, they should be boycotted socially and economically and property belonging to Jammaat-e-Ahmadiyya should be confiscated. And Pakistani federal secretary signed in favor of the resolution. A federal secretary can never take such step without the consent of the government. This can lead us to only one conclusion, this step was planned by the government well before even this question was raised in the National Assembly of Pakistan.

Moreover during all his tenure as prime minister of Pakistan, we do not find a single example when Mr. Bhutto was voting in favor of a resolution and some of his party members were voting against the resolution. In this background it does not seem to be a plausible idea that on this issue Mr. Bhutto left his party MNA's free to decide according to their conscience.

Now let us discuss the most important point in the article written by Mr. Paracha that when voting took place in the National Assembly of Pakistan to declare Ahmadis non-muslims for the purpose of law and constitution, NAP members abstained in this voting. To verify this claim we checked National Assembly record of 7th September 1974.A total of 130 members were present at that time in the hall. All of them voted in favor of the amendment. None of the members voted against it. Even the name of Mr. Abdul Wali Khan, who was chief of NAP at that time, is listed among the AYES. His vote is at no. 8 in AYES' list. Votes of his other party members like Mr. Ghulam Faroque and Mr. Umara Khan are also included in the list of those who voted in favor of the amendment.

Mr. Paracha has written that Maulana Kausar Niazi tried to convince Mr. Bhutto not to pursue this amendment. And it is mentioned in the article that Mr. Bhutto told his party members to vote according to their own conscience. But when we check the record Maulana Kuasr Niazi's name is mentioned at no. 49 in the list of AYES. This shows that either Mr. Niazi was not opposing this amendment or he was not free to vote according to his conscience.

One important aspect that should be pointed out is that even if one accepts the narration of Mr. Azizullah Sheikh that Late Abdul Wali Khan did not oppose the amendment because Ahmadis had voted for PPP instead of supporting NAP, this cannot be called a principled stand. Ahmadis are totally free to vote for this party or that party, or not to vote at all as they have been doing for more than three decades. The members of National Assembly of Pakistan, including the members of NAP should have decided about their votes after judging the merits and demerits of the second constitutional amendment. This step was bound to have repercussions in the future and by now we are very well aware of those sad repercussions. The wound created by this amendment is still bleeding. Let us pray and hope that in future statesmen of our country will take concrete steps to heal this wound.

(Please see The National Assembly Debates 7th Sept. 1974, Official Report, Vol 5, no 39 ,p 571-574)